

have met with circumstances, of which the natural tendency must have been to give them a determination of mind extremely dissimilar to the character of those whom they now so much resemble. And why does the influence of such circumstances fail to produce such a result ? Partly, because the influences which are of a more peculiar and specific operation are overborne and lost in that wide general influence, which accumulates and conforms each individual to the crowd ; and partly, because even were there no such general influence to steal away the impressions of a more peculiar tendency, few minds are of so fixed and faithful a consistence as to retain, in continued efficacy, impressions of a kind which the common course of life is not adapted to reinforce, nor prevailing example to confirm. The mind of the greater proportion of human beings, if attempted to be wrought into any boldly specific form, proves like a half-fluid substance, in which angles or circles, or any other figures may be cut, but which recovers, while you are looking, its former state, and closes them up; or like a quantity of dust, which may be raised into momentary reluctant shapes, but which is relapsing, amidst the operation, towards its undefined mass.

But if characters of strong individual peculiarity are somewhat rare, such as are marked with the respective distinctions which discriminate moral *classes* are very numerous ; the decidedly avaricious for instance ; the devoted slaves of fashion ; and the eager aspirers to power, in however confined a sphere, the little Alexanders of a mole-hill, quite as ambitious, in their way, as the great Alexander of a world. It is observable here, how much more largely the worse prominences of human character meet our attention than the better. And it is a melancholy illustration of the final basis of character, human nature itself, that both the distinctions which designate a bad class, and those which constitute a bad individual peculiarity, are attained with far the greatest frequency and facility. While, however, I have the most entire conviction of this mighty inclination to evil, which is the grand cause of all the diversified forms of evil; and while, at the same time, I hold the vulgar belief of a great native difference between men, in the original temperament of those principles, which are to be unfolded by the progress of time into intellectual powers and moral dispositions ; I yet cannot but perceive that the *immediate* and occasional causes